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Chairman: Mr. Loedel ..... (Uruguay)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 85: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Ognjanovac** (Croatia) said that, as a former recipient of peacekeeping missions, Croatia was proud to have become one of the contributing States to United Nations peacekeeping efforts. Her Government welcomed the growing capacity for rapid deployment of both funds and strategic stocks, but noted that many troop-contributing countries, including her own, still experienced technical difficulties in meeting rapid deployment requirements because of the complexity of internal decision-making procedures. However, the relevant authorities of Croatia were studying possible courses of action.

2. In developing and implementing comprehensive strategies for complex peacekeeping missions, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had received significant help from the Executive Committee on Peace and Security Task Force on rule of law strategies in peacekeeping operations. With stronger cooperation among the major United Nations organs, especially the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, and with better use of existing expertise within the United Nations system, much of the burden could be lifted from peacekeepers.

3. Improved training was needed to prepare peacekeepers for the complexity of current operations. The Department was making a necessary effort to coordinate the training provided by the various Member States — through the Standardized Generic Training Modules project, the production of new training materials, the provision of broad-based guidance to national and regional peacekeeping training centres, and the recent organization of pre-deployment training sessions. Croatia looked forward to further improving its training programmes and capabilities.

4. The safety and security of unarmed civilian personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations had to be one of the highest priorities. Given the current security environment, serious consideration must be given to the need for robust peacekeeping.

5. Croatia was currently participating in six peacekeeping missions, and hoped to expand its participation in line with its capabilities in terms of both the kinds of troops deployed and the theatres of operation. In the past year, a national security strategy and a legal framework had been enacted to govern Croatia's participation in peacekeeping missions, with the widest possible range of personnel of both genders from all components of Croatia's public sector.

6. As peacekeeping operations became more complex, not just building peace but rebuilding shattered societies and State institutions, the United Nations had to adjust to the new circumstances and strive for even greater efficiency.

7. **Ms. Bahemuka** (Kenya) said that universality and impartiality should remain the cornerstone of United Nations peacekeeping operations, regardless of their geographical location. The success of the missions in Sierra Leone, Kosovo and Prevlaka was encouraging, and timely intervention, similar to that in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, was needed in other conflict areas. Multilateralism provided the best hope in resolving the conflicts and escalating threats currently facing the world.

8. There had been a welcome improvement in reimbursement of troop-contributing countries. Kenya's own extensive involvement in United Nations operations was a sign of its deep commitment. The triangular relationship between the Secretariat, the Security Council and the troop-contributing countries, should be strengthened; in that context, the implementation of the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations was particularly important. Her Government looked forward to an operational United Nations Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS) and an improved rapid deployment capacity. The draft strategic manual on multidimensional peacekeeping operations would, when completed, be a blueprint for the doctrinal, operational and practical aspects of peacekeeping.

9. Kenya believed that regional organizations, which were best placed to understand the complexities of conflicts in their areas, had a crucial role to play in resolving them. Accordingly, it welcomed the efforts made by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the new initiatives taken by the African Union and the Group of Eight. Immediate support was required in order to set up multinational brigades organized along subregional lines to enable timely responses to crises. African countries in

particular needed to have better trained and better equipped personnel. Kenya would welcome assistance to the existing and emerging troop-contributing countries, as well as the use of strategic deployment stocks to offset equipment shortfalls.

10. The targeting of United Nations personnel and installations by warring parties was an alarming development. Without enhanced protection and adequate legal regimes, United Nations personnel were easy targets. The usefulness of unarmed military observers had to be reassessed against the current realities, when peacekeeping forces were often involved in intra-State conflicts.

11. **Mr. Gallegos** (Ecuador) observed that the Organization, committed above all to stable world peace, had from the start played a major role in dispute settlement and, failing that, had established peacekeeping operations to defuse conflicts. Ecuador itself had always based its foreign policy on a respect for territorial integrity, self-determination, and peaceful coexistence among nations, and had always supported United Nations and regional efforts to those ends. He was pleased to report that Ecuador would begin contributing troops to peacekeeping operations, starting with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and urged all Member States to provide peacekeeping contingents.

12. Different standards and different levels of development militated against peace; dialogue and negotiation were the best tools for solving any dispute, and progress would be possible if the legitimate interests of each nation were respected and accompanied by an equitable distribution of world wealth, fair trade, adequate transfer of technology and full observance of human rights.

13. **Mr. Al-Sharafi** (Yemen) commended the reports of the Secretary-General on peacekeeping activities, and took note of his review of the shortcomings of certain peacekeeping operations. Among the issues referred to by the Secretary-General had been the efforts to encourage non-participating States to take part in order to give peacekeeping operations a truly international character.

14. His country was aware of the importance of participating in peacekeeping operations and had accordingly trained peacekeeping units to be ready for service with the United Nations. As a peace-loving country, Yemen reaffirmed its readiness to play its part with other nations in the business of ensuring international peace and security.

15. **Mr. Mutisi** (Zimbabwe) said that a major concern of his delegation was the question of the privileges and immunities of peacekeepers serving abroad on missions, the legal basis of which lay in Articles 104 and 105 of the Charter of the United Nations. The legal status of civilian police and military observers fell under article VI of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, while the legal status of military members remained under the exclusive criminal jurisdiction of their own national authorities, making them immune from any criminal proceedings in the host country. Zimbabwe believed that that disparity in status was an awkward and unfair arrangement, and that consideration should be given to equating civilian police and military observers with military members. Also, the role of the troop-contributing countries in protecting the privileges and immunities of their personnel should be more clearly defined, and they should be made aware of the legal status of their personnel, as should the peacekeeping forces themselves.

16. His delegation attached great importance to enhancing African peacekeeping capacity and welcomed the efforts to establish an African standby force while maintaining the focus on Africa's greatest need, which was logistical assistance. His delegation believed that the principle of neutrality of peacekeepers and peacekeeping operations must always be upheld against potential misuse by countries pursuing their own selfish interests. In conclusion, he said that Zimbabwe was contributing to three peacekeeping operations and would soon be contributing to UNMIL as well.

17. **Mr. Ononye** (Nigeria) said that Nigeria had been a major troop contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations for over four decades. Consequently, peacekeeping and peacemaking were a prominent foreign policy objective. Nigeria had played a significant role at the regional and subregional level, particularly in the past decade. The huge human, material and financial sacrifices it had made in the maintenance of peace demonstrated its commitment.

18. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations had made significant progress in instituting the recommended reforms, having notably improved its ability to manage complex peacekeeping operations.

Nigeria welcomed the Department's various initiatives in such areas as lessons learned, gender mainstreaming, discipline criteria, rapid deployment, improved reimbursement, training, logistics and the rule of law, and appreciated the enhanced consultation with troop-contributing countries. The course organized by the Department for staff of permanent missions dealing with peacekeeping operations should be institutionalized, especially in the developing countries.

19. Nigeria supported the Security Council's plan for withdrawal from Sierra Leone but believed that it should be implemented cautiously in order to safeguard the country's security. Member States should help with the continuing integration of former combatants and with the training of the country's police and army. His Government welcomed the establishment of a government of national unity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but noted with dismay that very few combatants had registered for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, owing to continuing violence and obstruction by some leaders of armed groups. All parties must cooperate with the peacekeeping mission and facilitate the expansion of its mandate. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had worked together effectively to stabilize the situation in Liberia and all States should support UNMIL in order to foster national reconciliation among the various factions and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country.

20. On the issue of rapid deployment and the Department's difficulty in recruiting qualified civilians, his delegation urged the Department to use those already listed in its roster, without insisting on accepting only experienced persons. The composition of peacekeeping forces should reflect the global geographical representation of the United Nations, regardless of the region in which a mission was operating.

21. There was much benefit to be derived from cooperation between the United Nations and regional or subregional organizations in maintaining peace, and the Department's increased cooperation with the African Union and ECOWAS, especially in terms of logistical support and vocational training programmes for demobilized combatants, was to be welcomed; his delegation believed, however, that the Department should play a greater role in the training of peacekeeping troops and in increasing the use of contingent-owned equipment. The deplorable attack on the United Nations mission in Baghdad showed the need for improved overseas arrangements.

22. **Mr. Heng** (Singapore), recalling that Singapore had been contributing to United Nations peacekeeping for more than a decade, welcomed the progress made towards revitalizing and increasing the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations even while demands were increasing. In order to further strengthen the Organization's peacekeeping capacity, his delegation supported maintaining and refocusing the six priority areas for 2003 and the five priority areas suggested for 2004. Those priorities reflected three important, interrelated themes: robust peacekeeping; integration in peacekeeping; and safety and security of peacekeepers.

23. Robust peacekeeping required rapid deployment of a well-trained and fully equipped force, strong enough to be a credible deterrent and to defend itself and fulfil its mandate. Efforts to improve the Organization's rapid deployment capability and enhance training must therefore continue. Great strides had already been made in rapid deployment with regard to personnel, materiel and finances; systems had been put in place and tested, and shortfalls were being addressed. "Just-in-time" training and other training initiatives were also welcome developments.

24. On the related issue of the commitment gap, his delegation reiterated that, in order to ensure collective responsibility as well as robustness, the developed countries and their regional agreements must contribute troops, particularly since they often had the critical resources necessary for establishing a credible deterrent in a more demanding operational environment. While cooperation between the United Nations, regional organizations and African peacekeeping capacities was being strengthened, the conduct of peacekeeping operations should not be left entirely to regional organizations or countries. The model of the International Force, East Timor — United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, where troops from both developed and developing countries had stayed on during the peacekeeping mission and ensured its robustness, provided a useful starting point.

25. The complexity and multidimensional nature of peacekeeping operations made integration imperative in areas such as mission planning, training, information

and the rule of law. He welcomed the development by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of a coordinated, coherent and integrated training strategy as exemplified by the integrated mission training cell and budget for UNMIL, and hoped that integrated training would improve interoperability among units and troops. With respect to field information, he noted that the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor had established a joint information centre comprising both military and civilian police personnel, with a direct link to the political affairs section, which had significantly improved information and threat analysis. The Department should implement that model in other peacekeeping missions in order to increase robustness and enhance safety and security.

26. Ensuring the safety and security of peacekeepers was critical for morale and the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions as well as for the Organization's credibility. The despicable attack on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad had highlighted the need to adopt all necessary measures to protect peacekeepers; his delegation was encouraged by the Secretariat's efforts to investigate that bombing and review the United Nations security management system.

27. **Mr. Beyendeza** (Uganda) acknowledged the multidimensional character of peacekeeping operations and welcomed the progress made on the six priorities identified for 2003 and beyond. It was clear that the Department and other stakeholders were learning from the lessons in the field and were determined to continue the transformation beyond peacekeeping in order to have a more positive impact on the lives of the individuals and countries they served.

28. His delegation stressed the need to ensure the security and safety of unarmed civilian personnel deployed in the field because lack of security for them meant that there was a lack of security for the unarmed civilian populations where peacekeeping operations were taking place. Peacekeeping missions should have a strong mandate and a robust presence and should contribute to capacity-building and institution-building in order to ensure the rule of law and promote the stability required in post-conflict peace-building. Successful peacekeeping missions had been those where there had been no delay in taking action, where adequate resources had been provided, on time, and where there had been a strong, clear and robust mandate.

29. Noting that the African continent had the largest number of peacekeeping missions and of refugees, he highlighted the urgent need to build African peacekeeping capability. Africa was willing to play its part and help manage conflicts but was faced with limitations which prevented it from handling those challenges effectively. Support from the international community had been inadequate; African nations must be supported and their institutions must be nurtured in order to help them realize their goals for peace, address the root causes of conflict and promote durable peace and sustainable development.

30. **Mr. Zhang** Yishan (China) said the positive results of recent peacekeeping operations had demonstrated the important role United Nations peacekeeping operations played as an instrument for the promotion of international peace and security. Efforts to further strengthen the Organization's peacekeeping capacity and the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations must continue.

31. Given the growing complexity of operations, traditional operations were no longer suited for certain types of conflict; the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Liberia, for example, had highlighted the need for rapid, early and robust intervention. The existing foundation for peacekeeping operations must therefore be further developed to strengthen operational mechanisms, ensure an adequate supply of troops and improve logistics, training and command. Security Council mandates must be unambiguous, clear and achievable and every effort should be made to take full advantage of existing peacekeeping consultation mechanisms in order to increase coordination between troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat and to listen to the views of the parties concerned. All Member States had an obligation to actively support peacekeeping policies and ensure adequate funding and staffing of operations.

32. The United Nations must increase its coordination and cooperation with regional organizations with a view to increasing the latter's peacekeeping capability. Regional groups, for example in Africa, had undertaken peacekeeping operations with relatively good results but their ability to implement their mandates was affected by their limited capacity and by lack of external support. The United Nations and countries with highly developed capacities must provide further assistance to the African Union and other regional bodies for development of

mechanisms, information exchange, funding, training and early-warning and peacekeeping capacity.

33. Peacekeeping operations must fully reflect the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, respect the views of the parties concerned, be neutral in nature and use force only when necessary. His delegation supported the revision of peacekeeping mandates to take into account specific situations, including the use of enforcement measures where necessary, but stressed that any decision in that regard must be based solely on the facts. Observance of those principles would ensure that peacekeeping operations contributed to lasting stability and peace in the regions concerned.

34. His Government had decided to contribute non-combatant units to UNSAS and, for example, had sent a company of engineers and a medical detachment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It was currently considering the possibility of participating in UNMIL. His delegation would continue to support peacekeeping operations and to work with all parties to ensure their effectiveness.

35. **Mr. Baatar** (Mongolia) said that events of the past year had proved the validity of the six priority areas of attention identified by the Secretary-General. The United Nations had helped keep peacekeeping processes on track by organizing and monitoring elections, assisting in the repatriation and reintegration of refugees and rehabilitating war-torn economies. At the same time, the need for a closer partnership between the Security Council, the Secretariat and the troop-contributing countries was obvious, and his delegation looked forward to recommendations in that regard of the high-level panel of eminent personalities to be established by the President of the General Assembly. The attack on the United Nations mission in Baghdad demonstrated the urgency of enhancing the safety and security of all United Nations personnel.

36. Experience had shown that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration were the most important elements of any successful transition from civil war to peace and stability. Furthermore, the incorporation of rule of law elements in mission mandates was crucial to the establishment of new and durable State structures. The fragile nature of post-conflict environments had repeatedly proven to be a challenge. A comprehensive, long-term approach was required.

37. It was considered one of the main duties of the Mongolian Armed Forces to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Mongolia stood ready to participate in such operations or in coalition operations authorized by the Security Council. The Training and Evaluation Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had provided invaluable assistance in that regard.

38. **Mr. Stritt** (Switzerland) expressed support for United Nations peacekeeping operations as well as for peacekeeping operations undertaken by regional organizations pending deployment of a United Nations force. With regard to the latter, he stressed the need for a smooth transition and for a United Nations force sufficiently robust to fulfil its mandate.

39. His Government's priorities were reflected in the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/767). In that context, his delegation recalled the obligation of all Member States to observe the provisions of the Charter relating to the primary responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace and security. It welcomed the decision by the Security Council to discuss the issue of justice and the rule of law and looked forward to the report and recommendations of the Secretary-General in that regard. In order to strengthen cooperation between the Security Council, troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat, troop-contributing countries' meetings must be announced well in advance so as to permit adequate preparation and exchange of operational experience.

40. In order to ensure the security of personnel, military operations and security procedures should not be influenced by political considerations and the military and civilian components of missions should operate in a coordinated and complementary manner. Information must be shared openly, especially in the face of new developments; his Government strongly supported the Special Committee's recommendation that all troop contributors should be informed of the results of investigations of accidents and any action subsequently taken. The Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit should play an important role in applying lessons learned to current and future missions. His delegation supported the recommendation that civilian police and experts should have appropriate immunity when engaged in sensitive tasks.

41. The behaviour of mission personnel must be above reproach. His delegation supported the Department's efforts to prevent misconduct on the part of mission personnel and stressed the need for them to observe scrupulously all provisions of international humanitarian law; awareness-raising and training efforts in that regard could be improved and his Government would be ready to contribute to such efforts.

42. The many recommendations made to the Secretariat by the Special Committee should not interfere with the Department's work in the service of peacekeeping operations. They did, however, reflect a desire to strengthen peacekeeping operations and the pressing need for increased cooperation and exchange of information between the Secretariat and Member States. The information meetings organized by the Department had proved extremely useful and meetings should continue to be held between the annual sessions of the Special Committee.

43. **Mr. Cassidy** (Indonesia) said the growing demand for United Nations peacekeeping operations demonstrated the importance of United Nations peacekeeping efforts in the search for, or maintenance of, peace. In that context, the problem of the commitment gap must be addressed. The current structure, where the developing world provided the bulk of peacekeeping troops was unworkable and must be reviewed. The creation of the "rapid reimbursement policy" was also important, given the need to assist troop-contributing countries facing budgetary constraints to meet rapid deployment timelines.

44. His delegation supported the six priorities identified by the Secretary-General and agreed that the Organization's response to the situation in Liberia indicated that some progress had been made with regard to rapid deployment, although much remained to be done. Measures to enhance the safety and security of unarmed civilian personnel must be reviewed, in particular in the light of the recent unprecedented attack in Baghdad. Unless unarmed civilian peacekeepers could be protected, it would be increasingly difficult to find appropriate personnel.

45. Reform and revitalization of United Nations peacekeeping should continue and must adhere to the principles of transparency, effectiveness and efficiency; the true effectiveness of the reforms could only be evaluated once they had been fully implemented, however. Cooperation should also be encouraged between the United Nations and regional organizations in every field, including conflict resolution, where the regional organizations had a unique understanding of the local environment. Successful regional efforts depended on good relations among member States of those organizations, political commitment on their part and the support of the international community. His delegation urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to continue its study of the principles and mechanisms of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in peacekeeping and peace support operations.

46. **Mr. Vankham** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that considerable progress had been achieved in some areas such as the rapid deployment of funds and strategic stocks, particularly the strategic deployment stocks in Brindisi, which had been able to provide needed equipment to UNMIL. His delegation continued to support the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to enhance the capability of UNSAS, particularly its capacity to deploy peacekeeping operations within 30 days, or within 90 days in the case of complex operations, from the adoption of a Security Council mandate. It welcomed the new mechanism proposed by the Department to accelerate reimbursement to troop-contributing countries and urged all Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

47. His delegation attached the greatest importance to the safety and security of United Nations personnel. The terrible tragedy of 19 August in Baghdad had highlighted the need for serious consideration at the Special Committee's forthcoming annual session of measures to enhance the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers, particularly the unarmed civilian personnel of its peace missions. In that connection, he called for closer coordination between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the office of the United Nations Security Coordinator. Referring to the commitment gap, he noted that the developing countries accounted for the majority of troop contributors and urged the developed countries to participate more actively in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Lastly, he urged the Department to increase its recruitment of staff members from underrepresented and unrepresented Member States.

48. **Mr. Yotov** (Bulgaria), announcing that Bulgaria would be chairing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2004, stressed the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in peacekeeping operations. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the structure of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo — a unique model of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, including OSCE, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. On assuming the chairmanship, Bulgaria would make every effort to increase the contribution of OSCE to the maintenance of international peace and security through preventive diplomacy, conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction. It was particularly important to strengthen cooperation between OSCE and the United Nations in all aspects of international security, in accordance with the framework for cooperation and coordination signed on 26 May 1993, and relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/298.

49. In conclusion, the Joint Declaration on United Nations-European Union Cooperation in Crisis Management, adopted on 24 September, would be a major boon to future cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

50. **Mr. Awad** (Egypt) said that, since the deliberations had already lasted a number of days, his delegation would emphasize only a few points from its statement. The full text, in Arabic and English, would be distributed to Committee members. His delegation appreciated the dialogue that had followed the presentation by the Under-Secretary-General and hoped that that method would be used in considering all agenda items. He stressed the need to set priorities, and said that top priority should be given to establishing partnership among the various components and tools of peacekeeping, including the Security Council, the General Assembly (particularly the Special Political and Decolonization Committee), the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and other relevant Secretariat departments, the troop-contributing countries, regional and subregional organizations and the international donor community. It was to be hoped that the revitalization of the role of the General Assembly in the area of international peace and security would renew the concept of "uniting for peace" in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of General Assembly resolution 377 (V) of 1950. His delegation wished to propose that the theme of the Special Committee's next session should be "Participation of components available to the international community in the areas of peacekeeping, peace-building and peacemaking".

51. **Ms. Coelho da Cruz** (Angola) said that the escalation of conflicts could be avoided only through early warning based on an effective prevention strategy within the framework of the United Nations. She stressed the importance of an integrated, coordinated and comprehensive approach to conflict situations, as proposed in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/58/323).

52. The deployment of peacekeepers between warring sides in Angola's 30-year conflict had been essential to maintaining a ceasefire and creating a political space for peace to take root. Peacekeeping operations must implement the rule of law and respect local culture, customs and religious practices. Ultimately, their success depended on the concepts underlying them and its implementation. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/58/1), peace agreements by themselves marked only the first step; rebuilding civil society and establishing and consolidating democracy were much longer-term commitments. The latest crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone had proved the need to further strengthen the authority of the United Nations and to increase the Security Council's responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Poor countries remained much more vulnerable than developed countries to armed conflict, often triggered by social inequality, ethnic and religious tension or the struggle for control over economic resources. In that connection, it was vital to enhance African peacekeeping capabilities and to strengthen coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations.

53. In conclusion, she expressed her country's profound appreciation to all Member States which had participated in the United Nations Angola Verification Missions and the United Nations Observer Mission in

Angola and paid tribute to those who had sacrificed their lives to bring peace to the Angolan people. Her country aspired to become a troop-contributing country and participate in future peacekeeping operations.

54. **Mr. Guéhenno** (Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations) said that the Department was gratified by Member States' recognition of the progress achieved in certain areas, including rapid deployment and mission support, and would be responsive to their call for increased safety and security. A number of delegations had raised the thorny issue of intelligence, an issue the Department had perhaps sidestepped in the past at the expense of human life and the effectiveness of operations. The Department would be making serious efforts to address the concerns expressed in that area. Chief among the contentious issues raised was the commitment gap. While Western countries supported peacekeeping efforts, chiefly the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and the international security force in Kosovo, the African missions seemed to have lower priority for them. That issue should not be allowed to divide the international community but neither should it be minimized. He believed that there were ways to deal with the problem, obtaining the best of what each side had to offer, for example, by drawing on the Western countries' capacities to assist with communication, air operations and special forces, but on a time-limited basis. The Department would be turning to Member States, and particularly the Special Committee, for guidance in that area. Based on Committee members' observations, he was cautiously optimistic about the forthcoming expansion in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

55. **Mr. Tesfu** (Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Eritrea had levelled an unfounded accusation at Ethiopia in its statement of 17 October. Eritrea had accused Ethiopia of taking action which had endangered United Nations civilian and military personnel, but the fact was that the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) was in place because of Eritrea's aggression against Ethiopia. As UNMEE was deployed in the Temporary Security Zone, located, in its entirety, in Eritrea; it was virtually impossible for Ethiopia to exert any influence, either positive or negative, on its movements. It was ironic that Eritrea, which had thus far refused to sign the Status of Forces Agreement for UNMEE, should accuse Ethiopia of not cooperating with the Mission. Ethiopia had signed the Status of Forces Agreement soon after UNMEE was deployed.

56. Eritrea had also accused Ethiopian military personnel of "pointing their weapons at UNMEE patrols"; however, as he had indicated, UNMEE was assigned to patrol the Temporary Security Zone situated in Eritrea. Eritrea claimed that Ethiopia had laid new landmines in the Temporary Security Zone. In actual fact, Ethiopia had no access to that Zone, which was located in Eritrea in its entirety and under UNMEE supervision. If that accusation were true, UNMEE personnel should have been the first to complain but that had never happened.

57. It had become customary for Eritrea to accuse Ethiopia in all forums, irrespective of the agenda item under consideration. Had Ethiopia not been making every effort to avoid such unhelpful exchanges, it would have found no difficulty in citing the numerous instances in which UNMEE had been subjected to abuse by the Eritrean authorities.

58. Ethiopia had a wider responsibility for regional peace and security and was a troop-contributing country for various peacekeeping operations, including in Burundi, under the auspices of the African Union, and in Liberia under the auspices of the United Nations. Ethiopia's cooperation with UNMEE was fully commensurate with its interests and obligations.

59. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Ethiopian representative had raised certain issues only to create confusion. His delegation had no interest in replying to those baseless charges, which could not be corroborated by any third-party evidence. The Ethiopian representative's claim that the charges levelled by Eritrea were unfounded and baseless would no doubt amaze those Member States which had heard his delegation's statement of 17 October, quoting paragraph 3 of the progress report of the Secretary-General on Ethiopia and Eritrea (S/2003/858):

> "On a number of occasions, Ethiopian militia fired shots from their territory to signal to the herdsmen the presence of Eritrean militia in the vicinity. During the month of August, several more serious incidents occurred in the Aromo area of the Zone (Sector Centre). On two separate occasions on 5 August, Ethiopian militia pointed their weapons at UNMEE patrols in response to advice not to enter the Zone. On 9, 10 and 12

> August, a total of 102 personnel, most of them in the Ethiopian Armed Forces uniforms, entered the Zone in the Drum Drum Stream area in the same sector, refusing to leave despite repeated protests by UNMEE at the sector level. Subsequently, UNMEE lodged strong protests with the Ethiopian authorities ..."

Nothing could be clearer than that. Unless steps were taken to stop such actions, some UNMEE lives would surely be lost.

Agenda item 82: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (A/58/20 and A/58/174)

60. **The Chairman** said that, earlier in the year, the world had stood united in grief at the loss of Space Shuttle Columbia and its crew. That tragic incident had served as a reminder that space exploration involved risks, and that brave men and women who went on space missions jeopardized their lives to expand the world's knowledge of what lay beyond planet Earth, and to expand the benefits of space exploration for humankind. Human space flights had often been shining examples of international cooperation, with astronauts and cosmonauts demonstrating how much could be accomplished by working together regardless of their national and cultural background.

61. It was encouraging to see the continuing efforts to carry out human space flights for the benefit of all humankind. The International Space Station, the largest scientific project involving 16 countries, continued to have an international crew. He also wished to congratulate China on becoming the third country capable of launching humans into outer space. The crew on "Shenzou", which meant "divine vessel" in Chinese, had successfully flown in space and returned safely to earth. The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, based in Vienna, had served as the leading agency and worked closely with the China Manned Space Engineering Programme Office, the China National Space Administration and the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations in Vienna in order to ensure the success of that flight.

62. The thirty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space would be celebrated on 3 December. Signed by 113 countries and ratified by 88, the Rescue Agreement called for international cooperation in rendering all necessary assistance to space craft personnel in the event of accident, distress or emergency landing. The Rescue Agreement was truly a tribute to those who were, in the words of the Outer Space Treaty, "envoys of mankind in outer space".

63. The United Nations, through the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, played a pivotal role in establishing the international legal framework governing outer space. Within that framework, both State and non-State actors worked together across borders to advance human exploration and knowledge of the "last frontier". The United Nations also played an important role in ensuring that countries continued to work together to apply the benefits of space activities in order to enhance human development and security. The International Satellite System for Search and Rescue (COSPAS-SARSAT), which used space technology to assist aviators and mariners in distress around the world, was an example of such cooperation. Since 1982, COSPAS-SARSAT had assisted in the rescue of over 15,000 persons.

64. Five space agencies continued to make progress towards an operational international structure for handling natural disaster management through the use of space systems. Through the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters", their satellites could be used to provide Earth observation images to civil protection authorities responding to major disasters. Since its entry into force in November 2000, the Charter had been activated about 30 times to respond to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides and floods. Earlier in the year the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs had become a cooperating body of the Charter, allowing United Nations entities to request and receive space-based data under the Charter. In August, the United Nations Office for Project Services, had become the first United Nations entity to take advantage of satellite images acquired during the floods and landslides in Nepal. The processed satellite images had been used by the civil protection authorities of Nepal in their response operations.

65. In addition to disaster management and emergency response, international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space had benefited humankind in many other areas. It was vital to ensure that all nations had easy access to the benefits of space science and technology, regardless of their degree of economic and scientific development. The Third United Nations

Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) had adopted a strategy for such cooperation. He was pleased to note the progress achieved by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the Office for Outer Space Affairs in carrying out the recommendations of UNISPACE III.

66. **Mr. González** (Chile), Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, introducing the Committee's report (A/58/20), said that at the outset, he wished to congratulate the People's Republic of China for the success of its first human space flight mission, and express the hope that it would provide impetus in particular for developing countries to pursue the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space for the benefit of all humanity.

67. During the past few years under his chairmanship, the Committee had increased its efforts to establish a clear link between the needs of people and the benefits of space science and technology. As indicated in the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development, adopted by UNISPACE III, space science and technology had great potential to enhance human security and development. The Vienna Declaration contained a common strategy for realizing that potential, and in his view the Committee and its subcommittees had made good progress in that regard. However, the Committee had recognized that the benefits and potential of space science and technology had not been fully taken into account at recent United Nations global conferences, nor were the advances in space science and technology and their applications fully contributing to the improvement of the lives of many people, particularly those living in poverty in developing countries. The Committee had therefore begun to focus its work on the link between space and the priority areas of human security and development identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and by the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

68. The Committee and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had made further progress in implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III through consideration, at the annual sessions of the Committee and its Subcommittees, of relevant agenda items; the work of action teams established by the Committee under the voluntary leadership of governments; and the activities of the Office for Outer Space Affairs. Two of the eleven action teams established in 2001 had submitted their final reports with recommendations for further action. The other action teams were currently at the point of finalizing their recommendations, and he appealed to all Member States to respond to their requests for information and feedback. At the 2003 session, the Committee had established an action team to address the question of knowledge-sharing through the promotion of universal access to space-based communication services; its work would be linked with objectives of the World Summit on the Information Society.

69. In 2003, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had concluded the work plan adopted in 2000 for considering the implementation of an integrated, space-based global natural disaster management system, and had reviewed possible global operational structures to handle natural disaster management, making maximum use of existing and planned space systems. That work was closely linked to that of the action team on disaster management, and since the team would be presenting the results of its work to the Subcommittee in 2004, the Committee had agreed that the Subcommittee should continue to consider that topic at its next session. Disaster management was an area of increasing synergy of efforts of members of the Committee, United Nations entities and Office for Outer Space Affairs. The Office had held a series of regional workshops on the use of space technology for disaster management and initiating follow-up projects; it had also recently become a cooperating body of the Charter on Cooperation to Achieve the Coordinated Use of Space Facilities in the Event of Natural or Technological Disasters. The agreement between the Office and the Charter enabled United Nations entities to request and receive space-based data in the event of disasters, and had seen its first use when the Office has forwarded a request from the United Nations Office for Project Services for satellite imagery of floods and landslides in Nepal in August 2003.

70. Strengthening inter-agency cooperation and increasing the use of space applications and services within and among entities of the United Nations system had also been considered under the three-year work plan adopted in 2000. In concluding the work plan in 2003, the Subcommittee had endorsed the proposals of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, included the convening of an open, informal session of the Inter-Agency Meeting to which member States of

the Committee would be invited, and a joint initiative by the Committee and the Inter-Agency Meeting to prepare a list of space-related initiatives and programmes that responded to specific recommendations in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

71. With regard to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, the Subcommittee had adopted a further multi-year work plan for the period from 2003 to 2006, and had agreed that the working group should continue its work during the intersessional period. In 2004, the Subcommittee would prepare a draft outline of the objectives, scope and attributes of an international technically-based framework of goals and recommendations for the safety of nuclear power source applications in outer space.

72. On the issue of space debris, he noted that the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) had presented its proposals on debris mitigation to the Subcommittee. The Committee had agreed that the Subcommittee could establish a working group at its next session to consider comments received from member States on the IADC proposals and to consider further progress on the subject, including discussions on means of endorsing utilization of the IADC space-debris mitigation guidelines.

73. As recommended by the Committee, the Subcommittee's agenda for the next session would include an item on space-system based telemedicine applications, to be considered under the three-year work plan adopted by the Committee in 2003, which also related to the work of the action team on public health. Solar-terrestrial physics would be considered as a single item for discussion during one session only. The Subcommittee was also continuing its efforts to strengthen partnerships with non-governmental entities including industry; at its next session, there would be a symposium on strengthening partnership with industry that would address small satellite applications in agriculture, health and human security.

74. Turning to the work of the Legal Subcommittee in 2003, he said that the Subcommittee had continued intense discussion of a preliminary draft protocol on matters specific to space assets to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment, and had established a working group on that item. The Subcommittee had also considered sub-items relating to the possibility of the United Nations serving as supervisory authority under the preliminary draft protocol and to the relationship between the terms of the preliminary draft protocol and the rights and obligations of States under the legal regime applicable to outer space. Noting that the draft protocol was a matter of high interest, particularly in the commercial sector, he expressed confidence that the Subcommittee could successfully meet the challenge of reconciling differences between existing space law and international financial practices.

75. The Legal Subcommittee has continued its consideration of the definition and delimitation of outer space and the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit. It had also reconvened its working group to consider the status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space, and he noted with pleasure that the successful results of the first workshop on capacity-building in space law, organized in 2002 by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, had made important contributions to the work of the Subcommittee in that area. The Committee had recommended that at its next session, the Subcommittee should consider the practice of States and international organizations in registering space objects, under the four-year work plan adopted in 2003, and should discuss its contribution to the report being prepared by the Committee for submission to the General Assembly for its review of the progress made in the implementation of UNISPACE III recommendations.

76. The Committee had continued to consider, as a matter of priority, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes. At its 2003 session, the Committee had agreed to consider ways to promote regional and interregional cooperation based on experiences stemming from the Space Conference of the Americas, in light of the recognition by the Committee of the efforts among Latin American and Caribbean countries to institutionalize the Conference as a mechanism for cooperation and coordination in various areas of space science and technology and their applications. The Committee had also agreed to consider the role of space technology in implementing recommendations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

77. The Committee had continued its deliberations on the item entitled "Space and society", in direct response to the recommendations of the Vienna Declaration. It had agreed that the theme "Space and

education" should be a special focus of discussion under that agenda item for the period from 2004 to 2006. At the end of the work plan, the Committee would develop specific action plans to ensure that space-based services would contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal on access to education.

78. The Committee had further agreed to include an item entitled "Space and water" in the agenda of its next session. Space applications could successfully address various issues relating to water and could serve as confidence-building measures for a future international mechanism for monitoring and managing the use of water resources. He expressed the hope that all the relevant entities within the United Nations system dealing with water issues would contribute to the work of the Committee under that new agenda item in 2004.

79. Turning to procedural matters, he said that the Committee had arrived at a consensus agreement concerning the composition of the bureaux of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. The agreement included several new elements, such as a fixed pattern of rotation of offices among the regional groups, shortened terms of office, the need for consensus agreement on all the officers of the bureaux two years prior to the beginning of the next term, and enhanced opportunities for the outgoing, present and incoming members of the bureaux informally to discuss matters relating to the peaceful uses of outer space and to the Committee and its subsidiary bodies.

80. The Committee had welcomed the interest of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in becoming a member; it had noted that Member States needed to consider the geographical distribution of the membership of the Committee, and that consultations would be necessary among the regional groups before a decision could be taken. The Committee had agreed to grant permanent observer status to the Regional Centre for Remote Sensing of the North African States and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis.

81. In conclusion, he said that space science and technology could expand people's opportunities to live full, creative lives with freedom and dignity, particularly in developing countries, and expressed confidence that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space would continue to strengthen international cooperation in order to expand the choices available to people, thus successfully fulfilling its responsibility to achieve the goals enshrined in the Millennium Declaration and contributing to the promotion of human rights.

82. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) expressed his delegation's strong support for the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and requested clarification as to the current accepted definition of the term "outer space" itself.

83. **Mr. González** (Chile), Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, said that while that Committee had been discussing the definition of the term for a number of years, all the proposals advanced so far had been juridically incompatible and no consensus had been reached.

84. **Mr. Lichem** (Austria) said that in the deliberations on the new form of leadership for the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the core concern had been to bring the long-term, interdisciplinary and inter-institutional dimensions of the global agenda into meaningful focus for that leadership. For the first time in the United Nations system, de facto leaders could be identified two years prior to their actual assumption of responsibilities, thereby facilitating an institutional memory for both current and future leadership. In other words, the Committee had been provided with an effective "policy space" of six years in which to carry out its mandates, a solution whose wisdom was reflected by the unanimous support of all regional groupings and member countries of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.